



# The Marian Journal

*Keeping members and friends of the  
Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos informed.*

February 2010

Volume 2, Number 1



*“Remember that  
you are dust, and  
to dust you shall  
return.”*



*In the church, we  
say that Lent is  
not necessarily  
giving things up.  
It's [about] extra  
works of charity,  
spending more  
time in prayer,  
reading sacred  
scripture.*



**Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos**

**(Ordo Sanctissimae Theotokos, O.SS.T.)**

## What Lent Means to Me

Lent is a season of soul-searching and repentance. It is a season for reflection and taking stock. Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Easter, when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, the individual Christian imitates Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days. All churches that have a continuous history extending before AD 1500 observe Lent. The ancient church that wrote, collected, canonized, and propagated the New Testament also observed Lent, believing it to be a commandment from the apostles.

Christians throughout history have found prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to be the building blocks of Lenten spiritual growth. Lenten reflection acknowledges the brokenness of our lives and in our world and encourages us to find repentance through Christ. A Reflection on where God is in our world. In our busy lives it can become easy to think that God doesn't exist – or that he is not in our lives. It is important for us to slow down and listen for God in our world this Lent. And remember, while Lent is about giving something up, it is also about putting something positive in its place.

This is what Lent means to me, to live a simpler, more contemplative life. I find myself less stressed, and more in tune with the needs of others, as I put my needs aside. I spend more time in fellowship with God and His Word, and ponder the Love that is so great; His Son Jesus chose to sacrifice Himself for my sins. That is the greatest gift of all!

Dominus Vobiscum  
Dom Robert, O.SS.T.

## The Rosary: An Ecumenical Prayer

Although many Christian traditions outside of Roman Catholicism have a history of encouraging devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, very few Christians outside of the Roman Catholic faith are taught to pray the Rosary. In fact repetitive prayer of any form has long been out of vogue in most Protestant traditions. However, Christians of all denominations are beginning to explore the history of the Church and are reviving practices that had been abandoned by their forefathers such as monasticism. Along with the new interest in monasticism came a new interest in monastic practices. Christians from denominations that do not have a history of monasticism have begun to pray the liturgy of the hours and to use prayer beads as an aid to prayer. However, despite the renewed interest in prayer beads, these new practitioners have



***Important for the spirit of the Rosary is the "Meditations on the Life of Christ"***



***In the rhythm and song of the Rosary, in joy, sorrow, and the hope of glory, we hear the word of God as heartbeat and life breath. When, like Mary, we keep it, we too are blessed.***



***Sister Susan Loretta Doyle, O.SS.T.***

largely avoided praying the Rosary. The Rosary is still perceived by many Christians as an exclusively Roman Catholic prayer and not an ecumenical prayer.

However, the Rosary is truly an ecumenical prayer. In the papal encyclical *ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE*, Pope John Paul II wrote:

The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the *depth of the Gospel message in its entirety*, of which it can be said to be a compendium. It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial *Magnificat* for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, the Christian people *sit at the school of Mary* and are led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love.

When praying the rosary, the prayer meditates on events from the lives of Jesus and Mary. All of the events, with the exception of two, are taken directly from the gospel. These two mysteries, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and the Coronation, are among the most controversial for non-Roman Catholics. However, careful consideration of these two mysteries reveals truths pertaining to all Christians despite their opinions on Marian doctrine. The assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a result of the promise that Jesus gave to all of his disciples: that we would receive eternal life. Likewise, the coronation of Mary as the Queen of Heaven foreshadows the crown of righteousness promised to all believers when they get to heaven (2 Tim. 4:8). In everything, the Blessed Virgin points to her son Jesus.

Throughout history, the Blessed Virgin Mary has exhorted the faithful to pray the Rosary. At her Fatima apparition, Our Lady said "Pray the Rosary every day in order to obtain peace in the world and the end of war." Part of our work as believers with a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin should be encouraging all of the faithful to pray the Rosary.

Totus Tuus  
Sister Susan, O.SS.T.

## **Biography of Sister Susan**

I was raised in a Christian family and was devoted to God as a child, but like many teenagers, I fell away from the faith in high school. I was unfulfilled and unsure about the existence of God. I began challenging God to give me a sign of his existence. I had almost decided that God did not exist; when walking through Paris, I stepped into a cathedral I had never heard of, Saint Etienne du Mont. I felt an instant sense of peace.

I was still unsure that this peace was a sign from God. Two years later I finally started to hesitantly attend a Methodist church. It was the custom in this church to recite the Apostles' Creed every Sunday, and after reciting that, I believed in the communion of saints for several weeks without fully understanding what I was saying. I decided to look into the lives of the saints. In the process, I researched the history of Saint Etienne du Mont. Saint Etienne du Mont is the current shrine of Saint Genevieve. In researching her life, I was amazed to learn that we both had chosen to abstain from meat and



**Sister Sherie  
Jane Mercier,  
O.S.S.T.**



both of us had wanted to dedicate our lives to God at an early age.

I cautiously decided to act as if God had decided to give me a sign of his existence and I started studying the Bible after which, by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, I realized that God had given me signs of his existence my entire life. As I grew as a Christian, I came to believe God was calling me to consecrate my life to him by joining a religious order. This greatly confused me, since to my knowledge, a person had to be Roman Catholic in order to join a religious order and that a person needed to move and live in a religious community. Both of these conditions were impossible for me to fulfill, since I was Methodist and I had familial obligations which prevented me from living in a religious community. Still, I decided to follow God's call and was thrilled to find the O.S.S.T.

The charism of the O.S.S.T. appealed to me greatly. Just as Mary brought the Word into the world, we are called to spread the Gospel throughout the world so that all may know Jesus. As I have studied the life of Mary, she has continually brought me closer to her son. I have found that my devotion to Mary has led to a greater devotion to Jesus.

*(Sister Susan Loretta Doyle, O.S.S.T., Our Lady of Divine Providence Abbey, is a Research Scientist residing in Roanoke, Virginia. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry as well as a Master of Science Degree in Chemistry. Sr. Susan made her Final Perpetual Solemn Profession and took her Monastic Vows on December 8, 2009, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.)*

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## **Biography of Sister Sherie (The Significance of Mary in My Life)**

I wanted to share the significance of Mary, Our Most Holy Theotokos, and what she has done in my life.

A little background – I grew up in South West Michigan – across the lake from Chicago. Until I was five, our family attended a Methodist church where our family physician was also a pastor. Then he went into full time medical practice and with that, my parents stopped attending church. Our neighbors attended a Baptist church and we were hauled (he he) every week until I was in my teenage years. However, my maternal grandmother was Catholic (although not practicing) and I grew up in a very CATHOLIC city (St. Joseph), so the influences were there. The Catholic Church was too far away for me to go, however there was an Episcopal Church (St. Paul's) where I would go in and sit at the side altar of our Blessed Mother and meditate. I still continued to attend various Protestant churches but there was always something about Mary that would draw me.

In 1986 I made the trek to become a Catholic and was baptized, confirmed and received my first Eucharist at the Easter Vigil of that year. Interestingly enough, I really did not have a devotion to the Blessed Mother and would pray a rosary like at a funeral or something similar but not on a regular practice. In 1997, I left the Church because of teachings of a priest (which I eventually found out were wrong anyway) and got rid of "everything Catholic" including all the rosaries I had.



***By looking at the life of Mary, the mother of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we will see time and time again how God reaffirmed His specific will to Mary and how we, like Mary, can expect God to periodically restate His will for us so that we also know His ways and that the promises and provision He has for us are indeed true and will come to pass.***



During the time that I was away from the Catholic Church and Mary, I had become a Pentecostal minister and was licensed. I actually preached against Mary from the pulpit.

During this time my husband and I had remained close to a retired priest and still are very good friends. In late 2005, another priest that we had known for over 12 years passed away at age 51, just a few days after Christmas. We also had two other close friends, one a Pentecostal pastor, die without warning. The funeral for the priest was just after the New Year's and we were going to attend; however, I didn't have a rosary. Father Don (our retired priest friend) asked if he could give me a rosary as he had several that had been blessed by former Pope John Paul II. I said yes and he asked me what type as he had several. I chose a crystal rosary. But before he could give it to me, my husband and I both came down with the flu and a severe case of it as well. We were laid up for about a week and could not attend the funeral because of high temps, etc.

About a week later, Father Don came up to hear me preach a message at our local Pentecostal church and the next day we went to the Grand Canyon. He presented me with the rosary that he was to give me. Unknown to me at that time, when he got out the rosary, he had prayed and the Lord had told him to give it to me. He said back to God, "you know she doesn't believe, why?" But he firmly heard the Lord say to still give it to me. I took it home and looked at it for about three weeks before picking it up one day and praying it. Of course, I still remembered the prayers. This was the start of a journey for me that to this day I am so glad that I prayed the first rosary after all those years. Mary was drawing me to her and Jesus even closer than before.

After a few months of turmoil, I finally had to tell my pastor at the Pentecostal church what was happening. You would have thought I had killed the President. He was so angry and hostile because out of his mouth the first words were, "You are worshipping Mary". Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. I had to make a decision and during the Easter season, I did of course, return to the Catholic Church and because of that, a few years ago, I was surfing the Web, looking for a Marian group to belong to when I stumbled on OMT. I applied for postulancy and last January 1st on the feast of the Solemnity of Mary, I made my first profession with my final vows of course being made on December 8, 2009 plus my monastic vows with OSST.

As we read some materials whether on the web or in book form, some of these so called "Christian" materials are hostile towards our Blessed and Most Holy Mary Theotokos. Mary "maybe" gets a mention at Christmas but her role in our lives is so much more than a "mention" as the Virgin Mother of God. Others accuse of us of "worshipping" Mary but as I just told someone I knew the other day, we do not WORSHIP but rather Venerate (giving honor to) just as we would our governors, queens, kings or other heads of state or countries. In fact, my husband and I are very good friends with one of Arizona's former governors, Rose Mofford, and we give her honor as she had ran our government very well.

How much more Mary, who gave her FIAT to the angel Gabriel? We know she was young and she had not known a man, scared, the stigma of her being pregnant and only she and Joseph knew it was from the Holy Spirit. How much more Mary, who at the wedding at Cana, was worried more about others than herself and asked Jesus to provide? How much more Mary, who stood at the foot of the cross of her Son, Jesus, who had committed NO sin to die for our



**Abbot/Bishop  
George Singleton,  
Fellowship of the  
Holy Theotokos**

***"I feel that people  
who try to lead a  
monastic life in  
this day and age  
are probably the  
last of a breed in  
Christianity."***



sins? Mary had to watch her Son die for nothing He did and agonize with Him. Mary did and still does everything for us, for our good.

My fellow brothers and sisters, I pray that I didn't ramble on too much but wanted to share how much Mary means to me and how she influences my life daily.

*(Sister Sherie Jane Mercier, O.SS.T., Our Lady of Solitude Abbey, resides in Mayer, Arizona with her husband Mark. They have seven grown children. She holds a Medical Assistant Certification and is currently serving as Music Director in two Roman Catholic parishes and also hosts her own local Christian radio program. Sr. Sherie made her Final Perpetual Solemn Profession and took her Monastic Vows on December 8, 2009, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.)*

## **Desert Place to Market Place**

Many years ago Pope Paul visited the Carthusians in France and explained the way forward for the Roman Catholic monastic life for such orders like the Hermits of St. Bruno. This was for them to move out of their enclosed castles and to live and work alongside people in their towns and villages. This caused uproar within this ancient of hermetical foundations and they unfortunately rejected their Pope's new way forward and have been entrenched behind their walls ever since. This new way forward was seen as a rejection of hundreds of years dedicated to living the life of the hermit. I can understand that they felt very hurt and feeling cut off from Rome. They did not however understand why they should change a formula which was handed down to them by St. Bruno. But, I often wonder if they may have failed to see the vision of the future and where their wonderful vocation was calling them. I see the monk or nun or all those associated with the religious calling as one of sharing their lives in pulling between two opposites; the desert place and the market square. It is into the market square where we find Jesus fulfilling his ministry. He shared the joy and the anguish of people in their own homes and neighborhoods. I believe that this is where the monastic should be, living and working at the sharp end of the much wider community of all peoples. Since the reformation the monastic family have come back from near extinction and reinvented themselves into something new. I believe that the new way forward for the 21st century for those called to the monastic life is to step out in faith from being walled in and challenge people in their own homes with the message of the Gospel of our Lord and to be seen as the caring face of Christ in their ministry to those in need.

This is indeed a time for us to move forward in our monastic vocation and I pray that all those called to this life will be wonderfully blessed.

My warm regards, +George  
Fellowship of the Holy Theotokos

## **Biography of Abbot/Bishop George**

I was born in Chudleigh, Devonshire, and in my youth spent ten years with the Special Recce Parachute Squadron, The Royal Armoured Corps. Our job mainly was to keep an eye on enemy movements deep behind their lines. Much later in life I became an electrician and now run my own small business (a one man band).

***“The daily cycle of monastic prayer will be for some a simple prayer and for others the full offices will be used. The monastic vows taken may often be the simple vow of stability or the vows of poverty, chastity etc, because the life of the monk and nun should not be burdensome but to take time out in the desert place seeking that Union with God.”***

***“I have also believed that those in monastic life should be Evangelists who are hungry to show the world the Gospel Message. And through that hunger for the Gospel, people will see through the monk or nun the loving, compassionate face of Christ.”***



I was ordained in 1992 into the Old Catholic Church of Great Britain into a monastic order. The order was called the Community of St. Remould. In 2004 I was consecrated by the Orthodox Catholic Church as an abbot/bishop, with responsibilities for those called to the monastic life. I felt that the Orthodox Church needed to progress from its eastern past and step out into the western world and proclaim to the world that it was a Church which spans the globe. It is very difficult for me to explain the orthodox way of life to my fellow Anglo-Saxons. This is because it is seen through their eyes as something alien, something from Greece or Russian or the outback of the beyond. I am not making a lot of headway but I shall keep plugging ahead in order to build bridges between what we call the divide between East and West. It was this sharing of both cultures which led to our forming the Cappadocian Hermits of Saint Basil and opening up the religious life to all peoples in their own homes. Thus the Fellowship of the Holy Theotokos was born. Many other small groups joined us in their devotion to the Theotokos (the birth giver of Christ) and although we are all independent we are joined at the hip as it were, with a voice in the worldwide Union of Churches through Bishop John of India. This togetherness enables us to care and support each other in our prayers and share together all the wonderful spiritual blessings which each denomination brings into the fellowship.

I do not think that any of us who are involved with the monastic life will be breaking any records concerning our numbers. We can only but pray for vocations and I am sure that the Lord will send some good and faithful men and women to join the various communities over the next few years.

God bless, my warm regards, Abbot/Bishop +George Singleton

*(The Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos is pleased to enjoy a very special relationship with the Fellowship of the Holy Theotokos. The Fellowship of the Holy Theotokos is a collective name for several communities and individual ministries bonded together by a common cause. Each community is independent and shares in the fellowship of prayer and support for each other. The Fellowship contains a wide range of ministries within the communities and all of the communities which make up the fellowship have a common love of the Mother of God – The Holy Theotokos (the Birth Giver). To learn more, visit the Fellowship of the Holy Theotokos web at: <http://holytheotokos.org/>)*

## The Fellowship of the Holy Theotokos



*“That face of Christ is often found at the sharp edge of the Market place, where the monastic is often dressed in scruff Fellowship, helping the sick and dying, the poor and distressed and those outcasts of society. The Acts of the Apostles in the 21st century must be a mirror of the Acts of the Apostles in the 1st century.”*



*Augustine thought of the time before Easter as symbolic of “this present life,” and the time after Easter as symbolic of eternal life to come – much the way the Bible often speaks to us symbolically of Babylon and Jerusalem...*

## ***Three New Postulants Join the Order and Two Candidates Prepare to Make Their Promise***

On Thursday, February 11, 2010, Our Lady of Lourdes, two new members of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos made their Promises as Postulants of O.SS.T.

**Father Anthony Christopher Zachinno**, an Old Catholic priest from New Port Richey, Florida participated in the Rite of Blessing and Reception of a Postulant and made his Promise as a Postulant.

**Bishop David Demaciado Pascua**, an Independent Catholic Bishop from Hayward, California participated in the Rite of Blessing and Reception of a Postulant and mad his Promise as a Postulant.

On Saturday, February 20, 2010, Saturday after Ash Wednesday, another new member of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos made his Promise as a Postulant of O.SS.T.

**Father Stephen John Gregory**, an Old Catholic priest from Pasadena, California participated in the Rite of Blessing and Reception of a Postulant and made his Promise as a Postulant.

Candidates soon to be joining the Order as Postulants are:

**Father Roberto Alonso Sosa**, an Old Catholic priest from Somers, New York will participate in the Rite of Blessing and Reception of a Postulant on March 6, 2010 and will make his Promise as a Postulant.

**Jeremy (Josh) Jay Salquenettii**, a former Dominican Novitiate from Tigard, Oregon will participate in the Rite of Blessing and Reception of a Postulant on March 25, 2010, and will make his Promise as a Postulant.

Congratulations to our new and prospective members of the Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos on this wonderful occasion... Welcome!



***O.SS.T. Adopts New Logo***

***There is sadness  
in Lent, a deep,  
violet,  
introspective  
sadness. In  
Catholic faith  
worship we can  
hear echoes of  
that muted  
sorrow in our  
silencing of the  
Gloria at Mass  
and our laying  
aside the joyous  
and victorious  
acclamation  
Alleluia, till those  
songs break forth  
again in the pre-  
dawn growing  
light of Easter.***



***God's grace is  
with us always,  
even in the  
darkest moments  
of "this present  
life" – and that  
turns our  
otherwise sad  
Lent into a "joyful  
season"***



***Mary, the Theotokos, pray for us and lead us to do the Father's will for our lives.***

## **Message from the Abbot**

Dear O.S.S.T. Family and Friends,

~ *Totus Tuus* ~ "Totally Yours"

It's hard to lose a friend, especially your best friend. Friendships are one of the true treasures of life, and it's always hard to lose a friend. The feelings of loss can be severe. I know...I recently lost my best friend. But more than just a best friend – my "soul friend".

I recall the Scripture story where David had just learned about the death of his best friend, Jonathan, and Jonathan's father, King Saul, in battle. Poet that he is, David intones a magnificent lament. "How the mighty have fallen," he repeats three times.

*"Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions."* (1:23)

Listen to David's words mourning the passing of his best friend Jonathan:

*"Jonathan lies slain upon your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."* (1:25b-26)

I would like us to reflect for a few moments on the nature of this legendary friendship between David and Jonathan. Then we'll think about how our faith can help us cope with the loss of a friend. Finally, we'll remember that we have a friend who, in the words of the RSV, "sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).

If we were to define the perfect friendship, we couldn't find a better example than Jonathan and David. It had all the qualities we desire in a friendship: loyalty, sacrifice, encouragement, and unshakable devotion. Truly, David and Jonathan were "soul brothers".

David and Saul were extremely loyal to each other. Jonathan sacrificed a lot to be David's friend. Friends are willing to sacrifice for friends. Jonathan also



**Order of the Most  
Holy Mary  
Theotokos**

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**Our Lady of  
Peace Abbey,  
Atlanta, GA.**

**Our Lady of  
Divine Providence  
Abbey,  
Roanoke, VA**

**Our Lady of  
Solitude Abbey,  
Mayer, AZ**

**Abbey of Our  
Lady and  
Benedict,  
Lancs. UK**

**Abbey of Our  
Lady of Grace,  
New Port Richey,  
FL**

**Hayward, CA**

**Pasadena, CA**

**Somers, NY**

**Tigard, OR**

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encouraged his friend David. The unshakable love and devotion Jonathan and David shared for each other goes almost beyond words. When David got news of Jonathan's death in battle, along with his father Saul, the grief was crushing, as was mine when I lost my soul friend.

Yet David gives us some clues as to how to deal with our loss. First, David shared his grief with others. Second, David remembered the good and forgot about the bad. Third, David honored the memory of his departed friend.

Prov. 18:24 says, "Some friends play at friendship but a true friend sticks closer than a brother." While we treasure our human friendships, we know that they all do eventually come to an end. We move or they move. We change or they change. We die or they die. But this proverb reminds us that we have a friend who always sticks closer to us than our closest relative. We have a friend whose love never fails, whose feelings about us never change, and who will never leave us or desert us. We have a friend who loved us before we ever knew it, who loves us at our best and our worst, and whose love continues for all eternity. We have a friend who bears all our "sins and griefs," who shares all our sorrows, who knows our every weakness, and loves us just the same. That friend, of course, is Jesus Christ.

When you lose a friend you need a friend. Jesus is that friend who can ease your burden. "Lean on me," he says, "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." David was sustained in his loss by his faith in God. We know that when we share a faith in God with our friends, that friendship is forever, and even though death or circumstances may separate us temporarily, we will see our friend again in heaven.

So the best gift you can give your friend right now is the gift of Jesus Christ so that you can be soul brothers and soul sisters not just now, but for all eternity. Amen.

Wishing You God's Peace and Abundant Blessings,

*Dom + Robert - Bishop-Abbot, O.S.S.T.*



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